

Kraków, 15.04.2019

## Personal Statement

1. Name and surname  
Irena Czubek-Davidson

2. Diplomas and degrees

2014 – Doctorate in the field of musical arts, artistic discipline: instrumentalist

Title of Doctoral thesis: *Harfa w brytyjskiej muzyce wokalne XX wieku w aspekcie sonorystycznym i wykonawczym [Harp in British Vocal Music of the Twentieth Century From the Sonoristic and Performance Aspects]*

Supervisor – Prof. Dr Hab. Dariusz Bąkowski-Kois, reviewers – Prof. Bogumiła Lutak-Modrinić, Prof. Dr Hab. Irena Wiselka-Cieślak.

2000 - Certificate of Completion of Post-Graduate Studies at the Academy of Music in Kraków

1995 – Master of Arts: Diploma of Higher Education in the field of Harp Instrumental Studies, Academy of Music in Kraków

Title of Master's thesis: *Studia orkiestrowe na harfę wybranych utworów Maurice Ravela [Orchestral Studies of Selected Harp Works by Maurice Ravel]*, Supervisor – Prof. Bogumiła Lutak-Modrinić

3. Information on previous employment in artistic organisations

2002 – current - Filharmonia Krakowska (Kraków Philharmonic), musician - soloist

2000-2002 Filharmonia Śląska (Silesian Philharmonic), musician - soloist

1992-2000 Filharmonia Świętokrzyska, musician – member of the orchestra

4. Information on previous employment in didactic-academic organisations

2002– current - Academy of Music in Kraków, Department of Guitar and Harp, Assistant Professor

2009 - current – St. Wiechowicz Music Primary School Number 1 in Kraków, harp teacher

2018 - current – F. Chopin State General Secondary Music School in Kraków, harp teacher

## 5. Discussion of artistic achievements

As an artistic work subject to evaluation in the habilitation procedure (in accordance with the law on academic degrees and academic titles, Art. 16. Sections 1 and 2 of the Act of 13.03.2003, Journal of Acts. No. 65, item 595) I offer the CD *Davidson-Martin*, which is a live recording of two separate concerts which are representative of my artistic activity. They reflect two different styles and areas of my musical interests:

**Lindsay Davidson – *Double Concerto for Harp and Scottish Bagpipes***

**Frank Martin – *Petite Symphonie Concertante pour Harpe, Clavecin, Piano et deux orchestre a cordes***

L. Davidson's concerto was recorded 17 November 2017 in the Kraków Philharmonic Hall.

Performers: Irena Czubek-Davidson – lever harp, Lindsay Davidson – Scottish bagpipes, Kraków Philharmonic Orchestra, Tadeusz Płatek – conductor.

The work was created in 2014 as a kind of culmination of concert activity with my husband, who is an outstanding virtuoso of Scottish bagpipes. The combination of two musical worlds in which I turn every day in the form of a concerto with an orchestra, therefore, seemed so natural.

The harp part can be performed both on the lever and pedal harp. I had the pleasure to perform the concerto by playing the pedal harp two times and the lever harp three times. The presented recording is made on a lever harp. The bagpipes used in the concert are smallpipes (a small instrument, much quieter than the generally known Highland Bagpipes) and borderpipes (chromatic 'pipes).

The musical language of the concerto is based directly on the Scottish music tradition. This tradition can be heard in rhythm, melody and, of course, in instrumentation. This music is strictly tonal, without the use of distant modulations. The composer, however, does not quote any original melodies; he creates his own, fitting in style and tradition. It should also be remembered that these two solo instruments usually do not appear together, because historically they come from two competing environments.

The concerto is a three-movement work:

Allegro moderato '*a la reel*'

Andante cantabile

Allegretto '*a la jig*'

The first movement is in a classical sonata form transplanted directly from the classical concerto tradition, adapted to the specifics of the instruments. Both instruments are diatonic, a matter which particularly affects the bagpipes, whose drones and chanter have a limited range of tuning around the fixed pitches. The second movement is a simple ternary form and is a two section question and answer style: harp solo, bagpipes with orchestra, both soloists with orchestra. The melody and the character of this movement are reminiscent of film music. The third movement is in a sonata-rondo form and recalls the early classical instrumental concertos.

The harp has three essential roles which are highlighted in this piece; melodic, harmonic and rhythmical. Melodically, the harp counters the bagpipe thematic material. I must point out, however, that the style of the harp melody does not refer to the Celtic harp tradition; we will not find the ornaments or melodic phrases typical of this music in the work. Only the theme of the second movement presented by the harp can be associated with the atmosphere of "folk music".

Rhythmically and harmonically, the harp corresponds to the Scottish snare drum in pipe bands. It is the snare drum, not the harp, that is traditionally combined with Scottish bagpipes. The performance of rhythmicised passages and leaps constitute a significant technical challenge for the harp player. There is one more element that I would like to mention; the colour that is created by combining the sound of smallpipes and the harp. I have heard the phrase "irritatingly sweet" used many times to describe this sound.

The work has an undeniable charm, and is presumably the only existing double concerto for this instrumental grouping, and in this respect it is undoubtedly a work of discovery.

*Petite Symphonie Concertante* was composed by Frank Martin on commission from Paul Sacher in the years 1944-45, under whose direction the premiere of the work took place in Zürich in May 1946. The commission influenced the shape of the composition in terms of the instrumentation: Sacher suggested that string instruments such as harp, harpsichord and piano should be assigned roles as solo concertino instruments.. Such instrumentation and the manner of its treatment refers to the baroque *concerto grosso*. Martin himself was convinced that due to the unusual combination of instruments, the work would be purely experimental and he did not foretell it having a long life on concert stages. To the composer's great surprise, *Petite Symphonie Concertante* became one of his most known works, a kind of showcase of the composer's style.

The enormous attractiveness of the work is derived from the extremely colourful, interesting and unusual sound. In this work, colour comes to the fore as a structural element. The soft-sounding strings and harp were contrasted with the "glistening" colour of the harpsichord and piano.

The organisation of the work can be described as a symphonic cycle „from the introduction to the dance, through allegro and a contemplative fragment”<sup>3</sup>. The composer himself described it as a two-movement work. The first movement is created by an *Adagio* (constituting a kind of introduction) and *Allegro* with two themes. The second movement is an *Adagio* and *Allegretto alla Marcia*.<sup>4</sup>

The melodic material is based on a 12-tone series with clear tonal implications.

The first movement - *Allegro*, as in the classic sonata form, has two contrasting themes: the first of a very energetic character, one might say - even a predatory one - is presented first by the concertino group and then tutti. The second theme - lyrical, defined by the composer as *dolce* - is exposed simultaneously by the concertino and tutti.

In the second movement, Martin introduces only one subject, but in two different types of expression. In the *Adagio*, the theme introduced by the harp sounds lyrical and passionate, and in the *Allegretto* it transforms into a brisk and energetic march. The structure of the *Adagio* theme also testifies to the composer's great awareness of the possibility of using chromatics on the harp. For me personally, each performance of this movement is a mystical experience.

This is one of the few moments when Martin so clearly entrusts the harp with the role of a soloist. Due to its fleeting and delicate sound, he does so at times of a lyrical or colouristic character.

However, this initial softness of the harp's sound in the final fragment of the whole work turns into glissandi cascades, sparkling with colours along with the other concertino instruments.

I have had the fortune to perform *Petite Symphonie* three times. The work is extraordinary, so the circumstances of all of these performances were extraordinary. Each time it was a "festival" performance.

The last time I performed *Petite Symphonie* was during the Wanda Landowska Festival organised by the Academy of Music in Kraków. On 14 April 2019, together with my accomplished colleagues, harpsichordist Dr Joanna Kwinta-Zielińska and pianist Dr Hab. Mariusz Sielski, we presented the work at the Kraków Philharmonic. The distinguishing feature of this performance was the use of the instrument constructed by Pleyel for Wanda Landowska at the beginning of the 20th century. It is a harpsichord equipped with seven pedals (what a consolation for a harpist!), with an unusual sound colour resulting from the use of leather quills and a metal soundboard, which in effect strengthens the bass register of the instrument. Although Landowska's idea was to re-introduce the harpsichord

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<sup>3</sup> Ernest Ansermet, *Les compositeurs et les oeuvres*, Neuchâtel 1989.

<sup>4</sup> F. Martin, Foreword to the published score of *Petite Symphonie Concertante*, Universal Edition, Vienna 1947.

to concert life and play the works of the old masters on it, as a result, the instrument built this way delighted modern composers (F. Poulenc, D. Milhaud, F. Martin), thanks to which a number of works were created for the Pleyel harpsichord. The registration of the harpsichord part in the *Petite Symphonie* written by the composer himself may suggest that F. Martin, in creating his work, could have thought of this exact instrument. As a result, it is possible to hear completely different colours than those that I became familiar with in the two previous performances, for example a unique colour that arises as a result of combining the harp weaving its story against the background of ostinato harpsichord arpeggios using the lute stop and 16-foot register in the *Adagio*. As the issue of "sounding together" is what delights me most about music, I decided to present this recording.

## 6. Discussion of my artistic path and pedagogical activity

Is it possible to become a musician by accident? Can it be considered a happy accident? I think so, I think I am just such an example of a happy accident.

When the time came to finish the I. Paderewski PPSM in Kraków, my piano teacher Krystyna Adamska decided to somehow justify the fact that I was neither a great nor - more importantly - a hard-working pianist, suggesting that I take up learning some additional instrument. I believe that it was a very fortunate case that it was the harp teacher (and not a teacher for another instrument), Urszula Nowakowska, who needed half an hour to complete a full-time position. It turned out that it is possible to admire the sound of your own instrument and like the practice.

A few years later, entering the class of Prof. Bogumiła Lutak-Modrinić at the Music Academy I already knew that I really wanted to play in the orchestra one day. The dream was quite risky, because the then plan of study for the speciality of playing the harp did not envisage the subject of "orchestral studies", and the dream was realised unexpectedly quickly, because already during the third year of my study, I started working as a harpist in the Świętokrzyska Philharmonic.

Combining my professional work in the orchestra with my studies allowed me to realise how important an instrumentalist's education is in the orchestral studies mentioned.

During my studies I was fortunate to meet an exceptionally positive and open teacher, full of understanding for every student - Prof. Bogumiła Lutak-Modrinić. Currently, while conducting classes with my students, I often ask myself whether I can follow her example in some way, have enough patience and teach students to believe in their abilities.

Since I started working at the Świętokrzyska Philharmonic in 1992, I have been playing in orchestras continuously until now - at the Silesian Philharmonic (2000-2002), then at the Kraków Philharmonic (from 2002). From the perspective of almost 30 years of work and about 900 concerts

played as a harpist in the orchestra, I can say that the sound of the orchestra, symphonic and oratorio music continues to be my greatest fascination. The extremely wide range of orchestral colours and consonances is for me a source of constant joy in music making. It is difficult to describe the feeling of building a musical piece together with dozens of other people around - this is perhaps the only case when I willingly and with complete conviction submit to the "will of the crowd".

Despite its delicacy, the harp has a special position in the orchestra. Each, even the smallest appearance of the harp in a work is a solo part - I gained this awareness along with gathering professional experience. And when the harp is silent? Even the famous counting of endless pauses makes me happy. Could there be anything more wonderful than listening to the consonance of other instruments? This is particularly true for I have had the opportunity to play with many great musicians, soloists and conductors. Each and every such meeting helps in personal artistic development.

Playing in the orchestra projects onto each of the other fields of my activity, both concert and pedagogical. It is a way to hear every piece of music, to some extent it is a way of understanding the world. While working in the Kraków Philharmonic orchestra I had the honour of appearing with my fellow musicians as a soloist, among others presenting for the first time to Kraków audiences *Concerto for Harp and Orchestra* op.25 by A. Ginastera conducted by Antoni Wit in the 2015/2016 season and *Morceau de Concert* for harp and orchestra op.154 by C. Saint-Saëns in the 2017/2018 season under the direction of Marek Pijarowski.

In 1995, I obtained a diploma with distinction from the Kraków AM. The diploma concert programme included, among others Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*, from which my enchantment with the vocal-harp repertoire began.

I have collaborated with numerous choirs many times (Cracow Chamber Choir, Polish Radio Choir, AM Chamber Choir, Prague Chamber Choir, Capella Cracoviensis Madrigalists, Cracow Music School choirs, FK Boys 'Choir, Poznan Boys' Choir of the Kurczewski School, Adam Mickiewicz University Choir in Poznań, Kantorei Enge, Choir Amicus, Kantorei Sankt Barbara, Choir of the University of Agriculture in Kraków, Choir of the Kraków Philharmonic, Choir UJPII and others). The repertoire includes works by such composers as Britten, Brahms, Bernstein, Eben, Janacek, Saint-Saens, Franck, Rutter, Holst. Accompanying the human voice is different to accompanying another instrument: through this fascination I devoted my doctoral thesis to the vocal-harp repertoire in the music of the British Isles in the first half of the twentieth century.

In 2002, together with Katarzyna Wiwer and my husband Dr Lindsay Davidson, I founded the trio Celtic Triangle consisting of voice, Scottish bagpipes and harp. The group was established on

account of my love of the unusual sound and atmosphere of Scottish music. To bring the sound closer to the source, I changed to performing on a lever harp (known as a clarsach in Scottish music). The music performed by us differs from traditional associations of Scottish music with folk music. In addition to arrangements of traditional folk melodies, Celtic Triangle also performs contemporary works, including many compositions by the ensemble's piper - Lindsay Davidson, and a prominent place in the repertoire is given to charming songs to the words of the greatest Scottish poet - Robert Burns (1759-1798). As harpist with this group, I have played nearly 200 concerts in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Venezuela. Our concerts are always accompanied by a verbal commentary that helps the public understand the context of this specific music. The group's repertoire was recorded on the CD album in 2007, „*Celtic Triangle*”.

I have recently opened a new chapter of my concert activity with the lever harp, with the invitation to premiere Joanna Wnuk – Nazarowa's work "*Prelude et Grande Fugue La Catastrophe*" during the First Dawn Festival in NOSPR in March 2019. This performance received a very positive reaction and - I do not hide my curiosity as to if, and how, it will inspire other composers of contemporary music to use this instrument.

In 2001, thanks to the Music Academy in Kraków, the Polish-German Harp Symposium was organised, in which I participated as both a performer and organiser. That was the first time I performed the *Petite Symphonie Concertante*, together with Prof. Elżbieta Stefańska and pianist Prof. Andrzej Pikul. For a young person, the opportunity to cooperate with such wonderful soloists, "watching" their preparations during joint rehearsals could not be overestimated. In 2010, once again with the same team, we performed the *Petite Symphonie* in the Kraków Philharmonic during the Philharmonic and University Organ and Harpsichord Days conducted by Marek Mos.

I started working at the Academy of Music in Kraków as an assistant in the harp class in October 2002, conducting orchestral studies and chamber groups, which I teach to this day. From the moment I obtained my doctoral degree, I also teach harp as a primary instrument and specialist literature. My work in the orchestra is a source of knowledge and experience used in pedagogical work. For me, observing the work of a conductor with an orchestra is a kind of participation in the ongoing methodological-pedagogical workshops.

In December 2017, I was the organiser of the academic conference entitled *The Harp in the Symphony Orchestra [Harfa w orkiestrze symfonicznej]*, with the participation of the principal harpist of NOSPR, Krzysztof Waloszczyk. The conference concerning the role of our instrument in the orchestra, the role of the solo cadenza in the symphonic piece enjoyed a great interest of the harp milieu in Kraków.

Drawing from the experiences of being an orchestral musician, a chamber musician and soloist, I try to show students the diversity of instrumental art and the richness of musical styles and show these in the wider context of art. I encourage my students to undertake various interdisciplinary challenges, arguing that art, music and playing the harp can include a much wider spectrum of activities. In my class I have students who achieve success at competitions. These include:

Adrian Nowak, currently a second-year student at SUM:

- In 2016 he won the 1<sup>st</sup> place, Grand Prix in the solo category, and the winner of the 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the category of chamber ensembles at the 1<sup>st</sup> International Competition of Music Interpretation in Michałowice.
- At the X Międzynarodowy Konkurs Interpretacji Muzycznej w Przemyślu (X International Competition of Music Interpretation in Przemysl) in 2016 he won 5<sup>th</sup> place.
- he won 3<sup>rd</sup> place at the II Międzynarodowy Konkurs Duetow z Harfą w Cieszynie (II International Competition of Duets with Harp in Cieszyn) 2017 in the category of world premieres.

Fanni Nizalowski, currently third-year student of licentiate studies:

- Distinction at the II Międzynarodowy Konkurs Duetow z Harfą w Cieszynie (II International Competition of Duets with Harp in Cieszyn) in 2017 in the category of students.
- In 2019 at the III Międzynarodowy Konkurs Duetów z Harfą w Cieszynie (III International Competition of Duets with Harp in Cieszyn) she won 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the category of students.

In 2014 the Academy of Music in Kraków invited two world-class harpists to collaborate: Isabelle Perrin (2014/2015), and then Florence Sitruk (teaching from 2015 to present day). Thanks to the opportunity to participate closely in their lessons with my students, I have been able to refine my pedagogical workshop. Every visit of a *visiting professor* to Kraków is a period of very intense work, however, not devoid of moments of spontaneous meetings and discussions.

In 2009, I founded the harp class at the Music School No. 1 in Kraków. Already several years of my (formerly) small graduates are currently attending secondary music schools, and some I hope to meet again in the future in the Music Academy.

In October 2017 I chaired the Jury of the IV Ogólnopolskie Konkurs „Miniatura na Harfę Celtycką” [(IV National Competition „Miniatures for Celtic Harp”) in Łódź. In December 2018, I had the honour of chairing the discussions of the committee evaluating young people during the National Auditions of Harp Classes of Primary and Secondary Music Schools organised by the CEA in Warsaw. In particular this last event gave me a broad perspective and knowledge of the problems that young people learning to play the harp in various towns in Poland are dealing with.

I would very much like to broaden the offer of the Kraków Academy of Music with the opportunity to study with the specialisation of the lever harp. The first preparations for this plan have already been made - the Academy intends to purchase a new instrument.

*Mena Grubel - Davidson*